

Performative Commemoration of Painful Pasts

14–17 June 2016, Stockholm University

This conference will be hosted by the Department of Culture and Aesthetics, Stockholm University, Sweden.

Artists, museum curators and educators are increasingly interested in devising more effective strategies of remembering painful pasts. To this end, many recent projects commemorating genocides, civil wars, dictatorships and terrorist attacks, invite audiences to actively engage in remembering and reflecting critically upon these historical events, and what they mean to contemporary societies. The term ‘performative’ best explains the active engagement that these projects demand from audiences. This term is used to describe artistic and educational projects which promote a high degree of participation, through hands-on activities and other audience engagement strategies. Furthermore, it can also denote the possible effects which these projects may have upon audiences, namely to encourage them to become agents of commemoration, to transform their relationship with the past, and to reach a position of moral and civic responsibility.

This conference, and its subsequent publication, invites academics, artists, and museum practitioners to explore the usefulness of performative strategies of engagement with painful pasts, and the impact these strategies have upon the public. We ask whether and how performative practices enable later born generations to deal with the legacies of trauma, to initiate reconciliation and to attempt forgiveness. Do performative projects motivate individuals from persecuted groups to ask for justice? Do they sharpen public awareness of democratic values, and make contemporary audiences more sensitive to discrimination and intolerance? Coming from the field of Holocaust Studies, and having noted that performative practices are employed frequently in its commemoration, our goal is to widen our understanding of why and how ‘performativity’ appears in the memorialization of other dreadful historical events. Therefore, we are interested in projects commemorating genocides such as those in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Darfur, civil wars in South America, ethnic cleansings in former Yugoslavia, the Apartheid system in South Africa, the Soviet gulag system, the suppression under communist regimes and dictatorships, forced migration, as well as other major traumatic events in recent history. The variety of case studies from different backgrounds will help us to understand whether these methods are effective.

In their papers the participants explore artistic and educational projects that challenge the audience to contribute to social, political and civic activism and to strengthen democratic values within their societies. Examples of such projects include spontaneous memorial acts, audience

participatory projects, interactive theatre, exhibitions and artistic works that create immersive environments through the use of visual and tactile effects, and which involve a high degree of bodily engagement.

We are particularly interested to learn more about the effectiveness of performative practices upon audiences. Therefore, scholars are encouraged to examine visitors' responses which have been captured both through interviews, digital and social media, and also through the observation of various non-verbal visitor behaviours displayed during visits at memorial sites. Central questions to consider are:

- How do performative practices affect the visitor's understanding of the particular event in question?
- Do performative practices succeed in overriding the audience members' natural feelings of being distanced from these historical events both physically, emotionally and temporally?
- In the case of more recent traumatic events, are these practices useful in treating trauma, and in achieving justice for the victims of these events?
- Can performative practices be used to strengthen social activism and civic responsibility? - In what sense are these projects innovative? In particular, how do they differ from similar performance practices from the 1970s onwards, which likewise displayed a high degree of audience participation?

The 3-day-conference will be held at the Department of Culture and Aesthetics at Stockholm University, Sweden, 15 – 17 June 2016 Keynote lectures and paper presentations will be open to the general public, whilst special sessions are reserved for internal discussions amongst conference participants only.

PLEASE NOTE

- ** For conference participants only**
- * Limited places available**

Preliminary Conference Programme

Performative Commemoration of Painful Pasts

14 – 17 June 2016, Stockholm University

Tuesday, 14 June 2015

18:00 * Welcome reception (catering) at the organizer's home.

The reception is accompanied by a DIY Print Workshop led by artist Guy Königstein. The conference participants are invited to produce their own posters in commemoration of a painful future event.



Wednesday, 15 June 2016

8:30 – 9:00 Registration & Coffee

9:00 – 9:30 Opening Remarks by the Vice Dean of the Department of Culture and Aesthetics, Peter Gillgren, and Welcome Note by conference organizer, Tanja Schult

9:30 – 10:30 Key Note Lecture I, chair: Diana Popescu

Annie Coombes (University of London, UK), *Performing the Past, Building the Future: Women's Collaborative Art Practices in South Africa*

10:30 – 10:45 Coffee

10:45 – 12:30 SESSION 1: *Performing the Body*, Lecture and Round Table Discussion

Caterina Preda (University of Bucharest) will give a short lecture, *Performing the Memory of the Dictatorship in Chile and Argentina*, and then moderate a discussion between Claudia Mandel Katz (University of Costa Rica) and Fortunata Calabro (Birkbeck College, London) on *Regina Galindo – Violence, Memory and the Indigenous Body in Guatemala*.

12:30 – 14:00 ** Lunch, Fakultetsklubben (for active conference participants only)

14:00 – 16:00 SESSION 2: *Embodied Experiences – Walking and Listening*, Paper Panel

This session will consist of an introduction, a panel discussion and a Q&A session which includes the audience. Maayan Sheleff (art advisor at the Art Cube Artists' Studios, Jerusalem, and independent curator, Tel Aviv) gives an introductory

lecture, *The Guided Tour*, where she reflects on the qualities of artist-guided walks as performative events dealing with painful pasts. After Sheleff's introduction, four participants will present their case studies:

- Tovi Fenster and Roni Rachel Schlesinger (Tel Aviv University), *The Home as a Contact Zone: Performative Strategies and Practices in Promoting Israeli/Palestinian Recognition?*
- Samuel Merrill (Umeå University), *Walking Together – Walking Alone: Mnemonic Performances and Social Media during the 10th Anniversary of 7/7*
- Luis C. Sotelo-Castro (University of East London), *Performing Listening in Colombia's Post-conflict Context*

16:00 – 16:15 Coffee

16:15 – 17:15 SESSION 3: *It sets my Teeth on Edge – Sonic Interventions as Performative Practices*, Paper Panel, chair: Magdalena Waligorska

- Yaron Jean (University of Haifa), *The Sound of Silence: Air Raid Sirens and the Culture of Active Commemoration in Israeli Society*
- Srđan Atanasovski (Institute of Musicology, Belgrade), *Silence and Noise of Belgrade: Sonic Experiences of Srebrenica Commemoration Performance*

17:15 – 17:30 Refreshments

17:30 – 18:15 *Why Performativity? Artists' Experiences*, Part I, chair: Maayan Sheleff

After a short film screening, Guy Königstein (artist, Amsterdam) will reflect on the potential in commemorating imagined futures.

18:15 Change of location via public transportation to the following event which is for active conference participants only!

19:00 – 21:30 * FOLD OUT by Katarina Eismann, artist's studio *Malongen*, Nytorget 15B, Södermalm, closest tube station is Medborgarplatsen

As space in the studio is limited, the participants will be divided in three groups to see FOLD OUT. A questionnaire designed to assess the impact of the performance on the audience will be distributed by Diana Popescu to be filled in after the presentation. For those who wait for their turn there will be something to eat and drink. After the last group has seen FOLD OUT there will be time to discuss the work together.

Swedish artist Katarina Eismann is particularly interested in how research, documentation and the cooperation with artists from other fields influence the artistic process. For the project

FOLD OUT (2008-ongoing), Eismann has invited a choreographer, a performance artist, a cellist, a mezzo-soprano and a journalist to collaborate on the questions of the transmission of memory and the inheritance of war. The project investigates how family memories are passed on to the next generation and how identity is formed by inherited stories, as well as how they can be transcribed in a new place and time. Eismann acts as the project's initiator, participant and observer but through the tight collaboration with all involved participants arouses a learning process. The result is an art work which none of them could have accomplished working on their own.

Further information on the project and the involved artists you will find: <http://katarinaeismann.se/foldout>

After the 'performance': there are many nice bars in the area to continue the discussions over a beer or a glass of wine.

Thursday, 16 June 2016

9:00 – 10:00 Key Note Lecture II, chair: Diana Popescu

Ananda Breed (University of East London), *The Flame of Remembrance – Performances of Commemoration and Memory*

10:00 – 10:15 Coffee

10:15 – 11:15 SESSION 4: *Acknowledgment and Reconciliation through Performative Practices*, Paper Panel, chair: Samuel Merrill

- Malgosia Wosinska (University of Poznan), *My Trauma. In my Gallery. Unofficial Strategies of Post-Genocide Identity Commemoration with Contemporary Art in Rwanda as an example of effective Strategies of Remembering*
- De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway and Margaret Delali Numekevor (University of Cape Coast), *Audience Aesthetic Sensitivity and the Painful Past in Ghana: Tales from the Nkrumah's Vision of One Africa: 'The Reality' (2013)*

11:15 – 11:30 Coffee

11:30 – 12:30 SESSION 5: *The Importance of the Artist's Entanglement*, Paper Panel, chair: Elisabeth Fagerstedt

- Christine Vial Kayser (Institut Catholique of Paris/Poitiers University and IESA /Warwick University), *Assessing Artistic Investment with Traumatic Events: Case Studies from India and China*

- Naomi Roux (University of Cape Town), *'We are the dying hearts' . Political Activism and Performative Memorial Practices in South Africa*
- Aisha Muhammad (Art Institute Chicago), *Jelili Atiku's Performance Series 'In The Red' – Dealing with Trauma in the Aftermath of the Biafran War in Nigeria*

12:30 – 14:00 ** Lunch, Fakultetsklubben (for active conference participants only)

14:00 – 16:00 SESSION 6: *Seeing and Seeing Again – Performing the (Archival) Photograph – to What End?* Paper Panel, Chair: Daniel Pedersen, Stockholm University

- Tara Kohn (Northern Arizona University), *Translation and Re-Vision: On Seeing and Seeing Again*
- Larissa Allwork (University of Leicester), *Reframing the Photograph: Confronting the Nazi Past through Artistic Performance Strategies since the 1960s*
- Jan Borowicz (University of Warsaw), *The Perverse Gaze of the Polish Bystander of the Holocaust*
- Diana Popescu (University of London), *'The Missing Image' in Albertina Platz: Public Art as Historical Reenactment and the Performance of Perpetrator Memory*

16:00 – 16:15 Coffee

16:15 – 17:15 *Why Performativity? Artists' Experiences*, Part II, chair: Eva-Lotta-Flach

Francoise Dupré (Birmingham School of Art-BCU), *Practicing Memory Through Social Practices – The Dora Project* in discussion with Maria Sundström, Visual artist and curator, *The Wiedergutmachung Project – Reconstrucing the Past. A Pilgrimage into Family Heritage.*

17:15 – 17:30 Refreshments

17:30 – 18:30 SESSION 7 *Breaking up Official Memory Culture – Active Remembering as Social Responsibility*, Paper Panel, chair: Hampus Östh Gustafsson, Uppsala University.

- Oksana Moroz (Russian State University for the Humanities), *Artistic Activism in Today's Russia: Fight for Cultural Memory*

- Masa Avramovic (University of Belgrade), *Young People's Perspectives on the Educational Program 'Museum of the Past for the Future'*

18:30 Change of location via public transportation to Impro & Co (65 seats), Hagagatan 48, in Vasastan, close to Sveaplan or Odenplan. Snacks and beverages can be purchased on own expenses at the bar.

19:00 – 21:00 * *The Good Person in Malmö* by the Malmö Community Theatre

Malmö Community Theater started in autumn 2014, initiated by Theatre InterAKT. It is a community theater for young adults with experience of living as asylum seekers in Sweden. Their performances are created and performed by the participants, based on their own experiences.

Please note: The show is free but donations are very welcome! We recommend 100 SEK/10 Euro per person.

Friday, 17 June 2016

9:00 – 10:00 Key Note Lecture III, chair: Tanja Schult

- Karen Frostig (Brandeis University), *Performing the Archives: Art, History, and New Models of Memorialization*

10:00 – 10:30 Coffee

10:30 – 12:30 SESSION 8: *Processing Traumatic Pasts – Ritual Practices Revisited*, Paper Panel, chair: Imke Hansen, Uppsala University

- Philippa Hobbs (University of Johannesburg), *The Warp as Bulwark: Tapestry Practices and Performance at Rorke's Drift*
- Nikola Bakovic (Justus-Liebig University), *Railways of Reminiscence: 'Train of Brotherhood and Unity' as Commemorative Diversion and Ethno-Mnemonic Divider in Socialist Yugoslavia and its Restaging as Yugonostalgia*
- Magdalena Waligorska (Bremen University), *Staging the Forgotten Past in Public Space – The New Belarussian Holocaust Memorial in Trostenets*

12:30 – 14:00 ** Lunch, Fakultetsklubben (for active conference participants only)

14:00 – 15:00 *Why Performativity? Artists' Experiences*, Part III, workshop

Marieke Breyne and Sofie de Smet (Ghent University), *Sharing our Past with our Present/Presence – An Exploration of Site-Specific Artistic Work in South Africa*

15:00 – 15:15 Coffee

15:15 – 16:00 SESSION 9: *New Challenges Need New Practices*, Paper Panel/Workshop, chair:
Larissa Allwork

- Nena Mocnik (University of Ljubljana), *Toward No-Harm Research Design. Survivors of Sexual Violence of the Balkan conflict 1991-1995*
- Anca Doczi (University of East London), *Theatre of Testimony: Memodrome. The Romanian Diaspora in the UK*

16:00 – 16:15 Coffee

16:15 – 17:30 * CONCLUDING SESSION 10: *How Effective Are Performative Strategies When it Comes to Commemorating Painful Pasts?* Plenary Discussion, chair: Tanja Schult

Official ending of the conference

18:45 ** For active conference participants only: Dinner at Fotografiska.

Practical Information

Airports

Arlanda, Bromma and Skavsta (Skavsta = Ryanair – 80 minutes from central Stockholm)

From the airport take a flight buss (<http://flygbussarna.se/>) to T-Centralen (central station); or: Arlanda Express (www.arlandaexpress.se), or a taxi or public transportation (see: sl.se).

Local traffic

<http://sl.se/english>

There you will also find information about the SL Travel/Access cards.

Hotels/Hostels/Bed & Breakfast

<http://www.booking.com/>

<http://sv.hotels.com/>

<http://www.gastrummet.com/eng/>

How to find to the conference venues



15 - 17 June

Stockholm University, Department of Culture & Aesthetics, Frescativägen 22B (HOUSE A)

Take the tube (red line to Mörby centrum) or Bus 50 from Odenplan to the Universitet (The University). There is only one exit. When you come up, turn to your left. You will see the red

brick buildings – the first is called “A” – it is here we will be during the conference. In the Auditoriet (Auditory)

<http://www.su.se/ike/english/about-us>

We will travel together (by public transportation) to the two events (Fold OUT and The Good Person in Malmö) during the evenings.

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THANK YOU!